(b) Government of India has awarded 110 blocks in five rounds of NELP held so far. As on date 34 oil/gas discoveries have been made in these blocks by various operators. Out of 34 discoveries two gas discoveries have been put on commercial production. Remaining discoveries are in various stages of appraisal/development.

(c) Several steps have been taken/are in hand to accelerate hydrocarbon exploration and production activities in the country to meet the growing demand including the following:—

(i) Carving out more and more areas for exploration for offer under various rounds of NELP.

(ii) Quicker development of discovered reserves for enabling commencement of production.

(iii) Use of stimulation techniques for increasing production from existing fields.

(iv) Application of EOR/IOR techniques for increasing recovery factor from existing fields.

(v) Arresting decline from ageing fields.

(vi) Acquisition of exploration acreages and producing properties overseas to bring in equity oil.

(vii) Substitution of oil through use of non-conventional source of energy such as bio-diesel, ethanol, etc.

Adulteration in Diesel

†2671. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that adulteration in the diesel is taking place worth Rs 30 kharab every year in the country;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that while it deteriorates environment on the one hand, it also causes loss to the revenue on the other;

(c) if so, whether Government would take any steps to curb such adulteration; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) The possibility of adulteration of petrol/diesel by some unscrupulous elements cannot be ruled out due to huge price difference between petrol/diesel and various adulterants available in the market and the easy miscibility of these products with petrol/diesel.

While, as per a recent study conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research to assess the genuine demand and requirement of kerosene, siphoning off of kerosene from PDS to non-household use is estimated as 18.1 per cent of total sale of PDS kerosene, no estimation of loss to the exchequer on account of adulteration in petrol and diesel is available.

(c) and (d) The Government/Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have taken the following steps to contain the menace of adulteration:—

(i) Under the Control Orders issued by the Government to prevent fuel adulteration, under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, State Governments are empowered to take action against those indulging in adulteration. Government have requested the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations to take steps to control adulteration.

(ii) OMCs undertake regular and surprise inspections of Retail Outlets and also take action under Marketing Discipline Guidelines (MDG) and Dealership Agreements against those indulging in adulteration and malpractices. MDG provide for penalty of termination of dealership in cases of adulteration being established.

(iii) As advised by the Government Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have created a separate wing to report to a Director other than Director (Marketing), which will oversee and monitor all activities and operations to curb adulteration and specify norms and guidelines in this regard.

(iv) Keeping in view the misuse/diversion of SKO for adulteration, the import of SKO by private parties has been canalized through OMCs.

(v) OMCs have introduced new tamper proof tank-truck locking systems to prevent en-route adulteration by transporters.

With a view to checking adulteration, the Government has asked OMCs to take the following further measures:-

(i) Inspection, certification and auditing of retail outlets (ROs) by reputed external agencies;

(ii) Introduction of market system in adulterants;

(iii) Monitoring of movement of Tank Trucks (TTs) transporting Motor Spirit (MS), High Speed Diesel (HSD) and Kerosene through Global Positioning system (GPS);

(iv) Drawal/testing of samples by independent agencies;

(v) Automation of retail outlets.

India as oil refining hub

2672. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India propose to turn into an oil refining hub of the Asia-Pacific region and large refining capacities are set to roll out in the next few years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of locations where such hubs are proposed to be setup specifically with reference to Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) In view of India's emerging position as an exporter of petroleum products, Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) was asked to prepare a detailed feasibility study on making India as an investment destination for refineries, in particular export-oriented refineries, aimed at promoting India as the refining hub of South Asia/South-East Asia. In view of the delicensing of the refinery sector since June, 1998, the report of the study has been given to the PSUs to take a decision on setting up of more petroleum infrastructure, based on economic considerations. Moreover, following new grass-root refinery projects are under implementation to